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OBITUARY

Frank Church Dies; Was Idaho Senator

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Frank Church, an eloquent and independent voice in the Senate for nearly a quarter of a century who called for compassion at home and courageous common sense abroad, died of cancer yesterday at his home in Bethesda. He was 59.

He represented Idaho as a Democrat in the Senate for 24 years before leaving office in January 1981 following his defeat by Republican Steven D. Symms.

Sen. Church was chairman of the prestigious Foreign Relations Committee during his last two years in the Senate.

Sen. Church probably became best known as a longtime critic of American policy in Southeast Asia. He began speaking against the Vietnam War in 1963, long before it was fashionable in conservative states such as Idaho, or even among liberal Democrats.

He said that the war was not aggression by proxy from China or Moscow but an indigenous revolution, led by a man—Ho Chi Minh—who appeared to be the only true Vietnamese leader on the scene. He also had said that in fighting the war, this nation's executive branch was exercising war-making powers that belong to Congress.

He left his mark on legislation that included civil rights, the environment and cost-of-living payments for the elderly. He also was an author of legislation that brought about unprecedented restrictions on the war-making powers of the president. He was the coauthor, with Sens. John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and Clifford Case (R-N.J.), of legislation aimed at curbing the fighting in Southeast Asia by cutting off funds.

In the mid-1970s, as chairman of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, popularly known as the Senate Intelligence or Church committee, he gained bipartisan support.

The committee explored invasion of privacy of American citizens by the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency. It also revealed projects by the Central Intelligence Agency to overthrow the Marxist government of Chilean president Salvador Allende and to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

One measure of his effectiveness as a senator and committee chairman was the fact that the committee's final report, which was both detailed and well written, was approved by every member of the panel. These included senators ranging from Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and John Tower (R-Tex.) to Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) and Gary Hart (D-Colo.).

His years as Foreign Relations chairman were less successful. Although he had helped guide the Panama Canal Treaty through the Senate, he was unable to gain ratification for a strategic arms pact negotiated with the Soviet Union by the Carter administration. He personally had opposed ratification for a time when the existence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba was revealed.

Over the years, he gained the approval of the voters of Idaho as an unyielding champion of water interests vital to agriculture. Although he voted for much of the liberal agenda of the Johnson administration, he departed from that fold at crucial times. He was against abortion and was one of the leading voices against gun control.

Also during the 1970s, he chaired a Foreign Relations subcommittee that examined multinational corporations. Hearings revealed blacklists by Arab nations of firms doing business with Israel and bribes given by American concerns to win foreign contracts.

He also was chairman of the Senate Committee on Aging for eight years and had been an early advocate of financial disclosure. In 1964, he began making public his income and assets, and he sponsored a 1973 amendment that required such disclosures during congressional campaigns.

In 1976, he made a late bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. He said that his campaign's primary issue was to "reestablish the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of

the people." He won four primaries before withdrawing from the race.

When Congress learned earlier this year that Sen. Church had cancer, it approved a bill naming 2.2 million acres of Idaho wilderness in his honor. The area is called The Frank Church River of No Return.

Upon learning of his death, President Reagan said Sen. Church "served his nation with distinction and dedication. His abiding interest in foreign policy made an important intellectual contribution to our nation."

Frank Forrester Church was born July 25, 1924, in Boise, Idaho, to Frank Forrester Church 2nd and Laura Bilderback Church. His father's occupation was owner of a sporting goods store and his hobby was politics. A strong believer in the conservative branch of the Republican Party, he detested the domestic policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

To stimulate debate at the dinner table and to further the future senator's education, the elder Church

encouraged his son to study history and politics at the library. This enabled the younger Church to argue the "Democratic" side in debates with his father.

Perhaps those debates led to Sen. Church's victory in 1941 in the American Legion's national oratory contest. However, it also changed his life in another way.

Sen. Church later recalled to a reporter, "I decided, much to Dad's consternation, that he belonged to the wrong party."

He earned a bachelor's degree at Stanford University and was an Army intelligence officer in the China-Burma-India theater. After the war, he was attending law school when he became plagued by a nagging backache.

At the age of 23, he was diagnosed as suffering from cancer, with no more than six months to live. One physician recommended radical surgery and radiation therapy. Sen. Church's weight plunged to about 80 pounds, but he returned to Stanford's law school and graduated with his class.

On June 21, 1947, he married his high school sweetheart, Jean Bethine Clark. Her father was Chase A. Clark, a Democrat who was Idaho's governor in 1941 and 1942 and later was a U.S. District Court judge. In 1956, Sen. Church was a lawyer whose only try for elective office, to the state legislature four years earlier, had ended in defeat.

Yet his father-in-law, and others, believed he had a chance to capture a seat in the U.S. Senate. Sen. Church first ran against Glen Taylor, a for-

mer senator who had run for vice president on Henry Wallace's Progressive Party ticket in 1948. He beat Taylor by 170 votes. In the 1956 general election he faced incumbent Sen. Herman Welker, a McCarthyite. Sen. Church won a fairly easy victory, becoming at the age of 32 the nation's youngest senator.

Upon arriving in Washington, he became a protege of then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. After helping Johnson on several crucial votes, including sponsorship of key civil rights legislation in the 1950s, Johnson helped him gain seats on the old Interior Committee, crucial to a senator from a western state, and on Foreign Relations. Sen. Church was keynote speaker at the 1960 Democratic National Convention.

After Johnson became president and Sen. Church began opposing the war in Vietnam, many believed his Senate days were numbered. But like a previous maverick Idaho senator, William E. Borah, Sen. Church went on winning. Indeed, in a 1976 interview, his 1964 Republican opponent, Jack Hawley, revealed that he had voted for Sen. Church ever since his own race.

"The most impressive thing about him [Sen. Church] was the real gutsy stand against the war," Hawley said. "He was pretty consistent on that. He had the guts to be against it early."

Since 1981, Sen. Church had practiced international law in Washington with the firm of Whitman & Ransom.

In addition to his wife, of Bethesda, survivors include two sons, Forrest, of New York City, and Chase, of Bethesda, and two grandchildren.